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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

GRADE 6 ASSESSMENT

1999 RESULTS

NOVA SCOTIA
Department of Education

English Language Arts Grade 6 Assessment

In the Spring of 1999, 11 939 grade six students participated in an assessment for English language arts. The Department of Education selected randomly 4 013 student papers, approximately 34%, for marking by a central panel of teachers in July.

The assessment was based on the learning outcomes as described in the *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum, 4–6*. There were eight sessions that involved reading for information, viewing critically, reading and representing a short story, writing a response to a poem, and writing a personal narrative. Sessions ranged from 30 to 90 minutes and involved individual and group tasks.

The results in this report are presented to demonstrate the performance of students in the above tasks. The results are given at the provincial and board levels. There is no individual or school information available.

The sample of 4 013 student papers was marked by grade 6 teachers from across the province. The sample was statistically chosen so that it could be used to represent the performance of all grade 6 students. Each of the following graphs has two broken vertical lines around the provincial results. We can be confident that results of all 11 939 students would fall within the range of the lines if all 11 939 papers had been marked.

The informational text was marked out of ten. All other parts of the assessment—media text, short story (story board), poetry, and personal narrative—were marked against a predetermined set of criteria. Criteria included levels 1 through 5, no response (0), and non-classifiable (nc). The assessment was designed with the expectation that grade 6 students would perform at level 3 or above. All graphs, except for the informational text, portray student performance at level 3 or above.

In January and February 2000, all grade 6 teachers participated in full-day inservices to prepare them for the administration of this year's assessment. The assessment will be administered between March 20 and April 20, 2000.

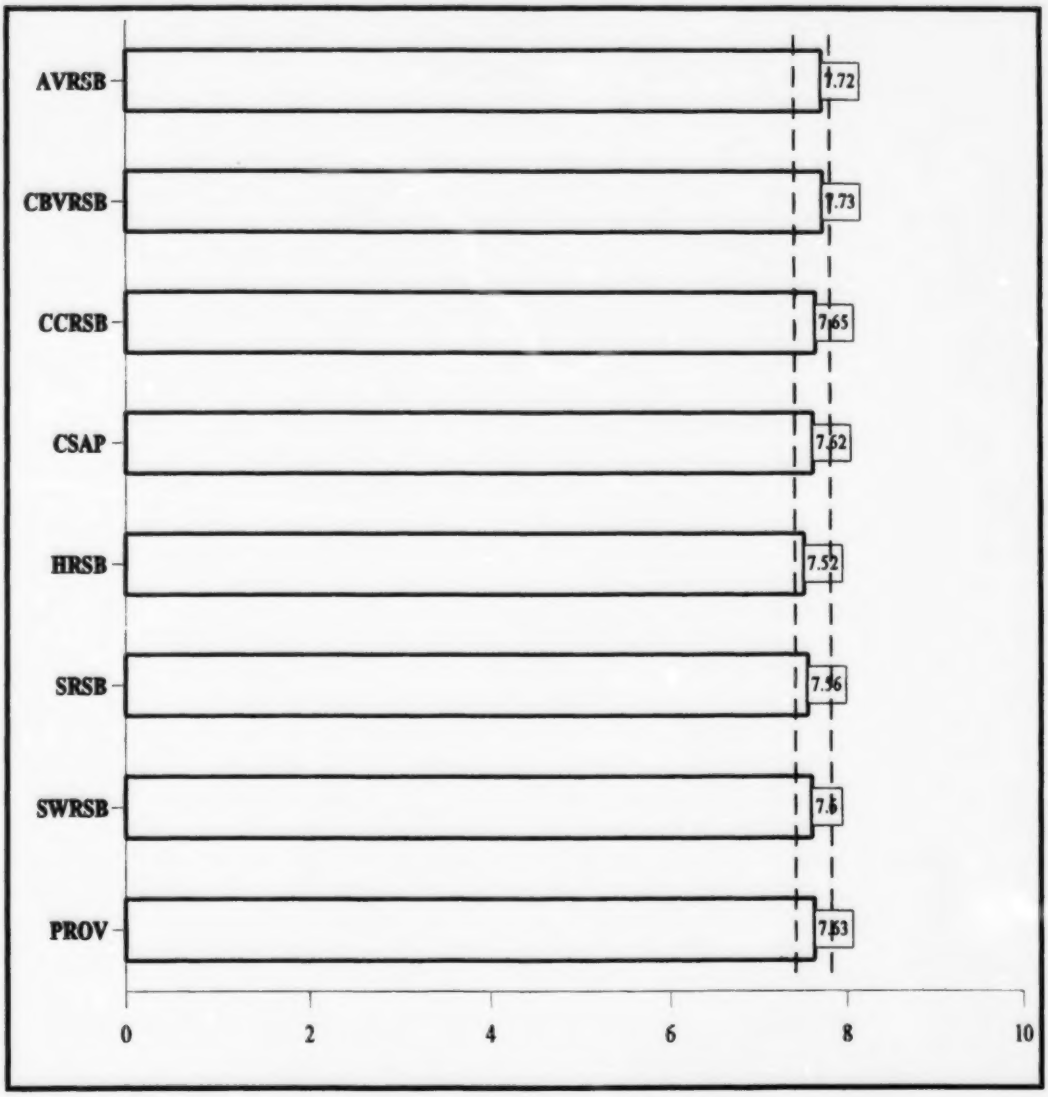
As the assessment is designed to provide information about the achievement of student learning based on set criteria, it is important that the results not be interpreted by ranking the performance of boards. Instead, the performance of each board should be considered in relation to the percentage of students achieving at the level of expectation (level 3) or above, by asking, "Is this good enough?"

Informational Text

In this session, students were asked to read and view an informational text, *How soccer balls are made.* The text consisted of print text describing the process of making soccer balls and included a number of colour visuals to support the explanation. Students were given ten multiple choice questions and asked to select the correct or best response for each.

The provincial mean score is 7.63.

Figure 1



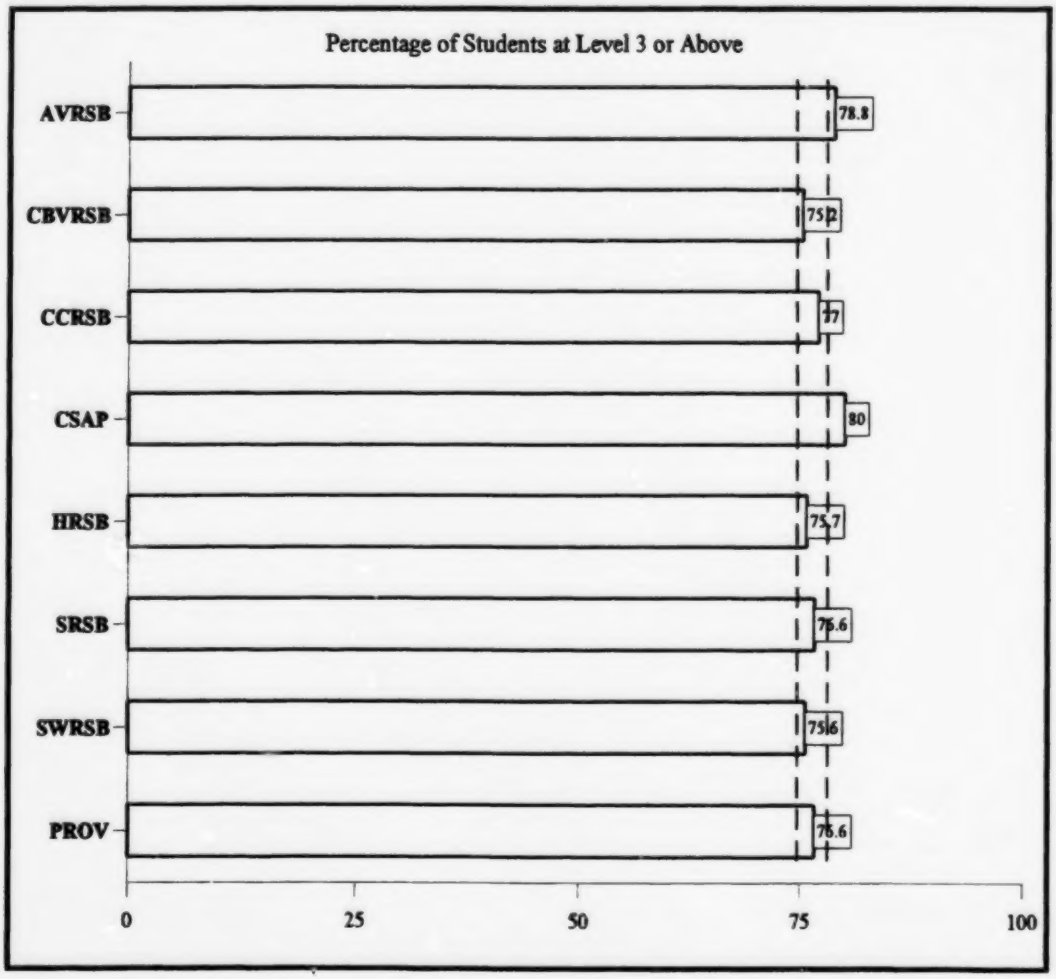
Media Text

Students were presented with a visual advertisement and asked to write critical responses that would consider the purpose and significance of the constructed visual environment and its component parts; reflect upon intent, purpose, content, context; and analyse and communicate the meaning of what was viewed.

To achieve Level 3, a student must recognize more than one message and cite some examples from the visual text in support of the author's intent or purpose. Figure 2 presents the results by the percentage of students who achieved at Level 3 or above.

At the provincial level, 76.6 % of students achieved at the level of expectation or above.

Figure 2



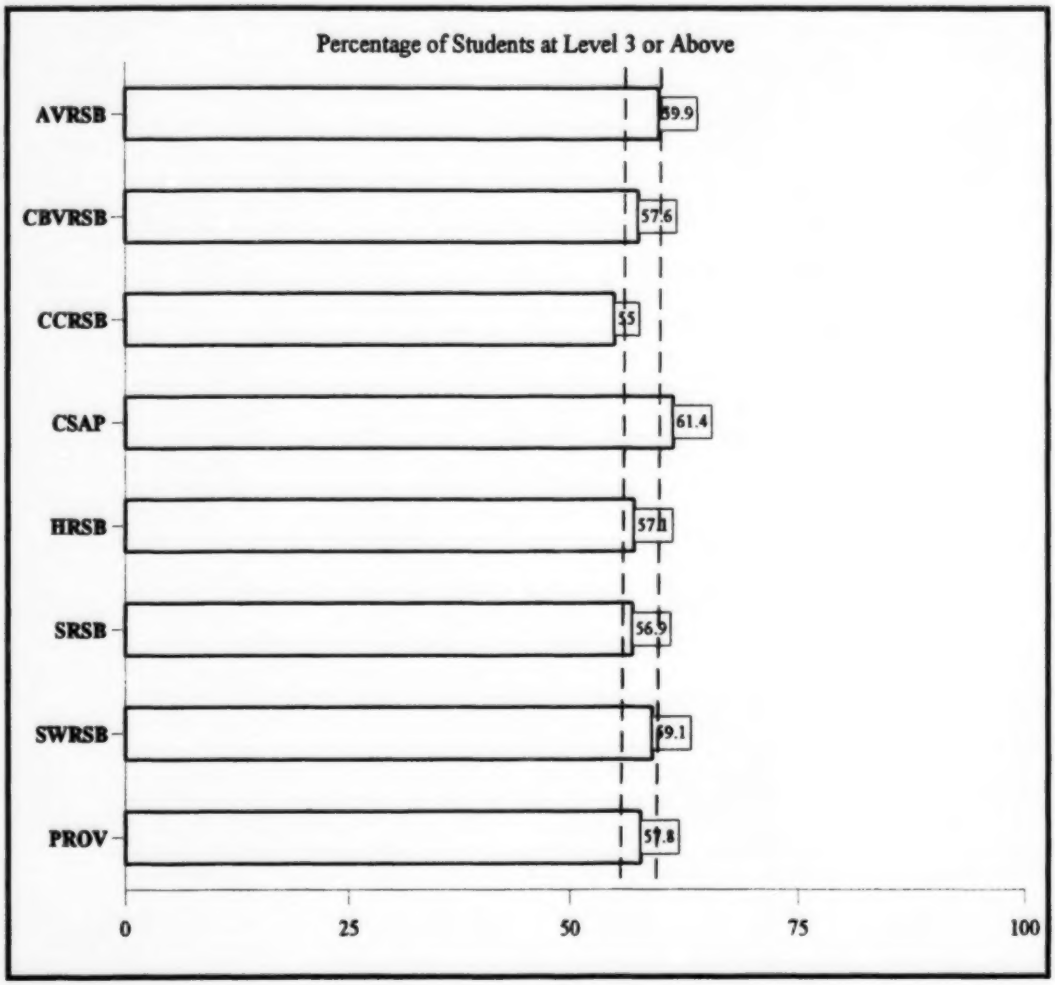
Short Story

Students were asked to respond to a short story by means of a story board, which is a sequential retelling of a story using pictures and words.

To achieve at Level 3, a student must offer an adequate retelling through satisfactory use of pictures and words. Events must be presented accurately and arranged in a reasonable order.

Figure 3 gives the percentage of students who attained level 3 or above, the level of expectation for grade 6 students. For the province, 57.8 % of grade 6 students performed at level 3 or above.

Figure 3

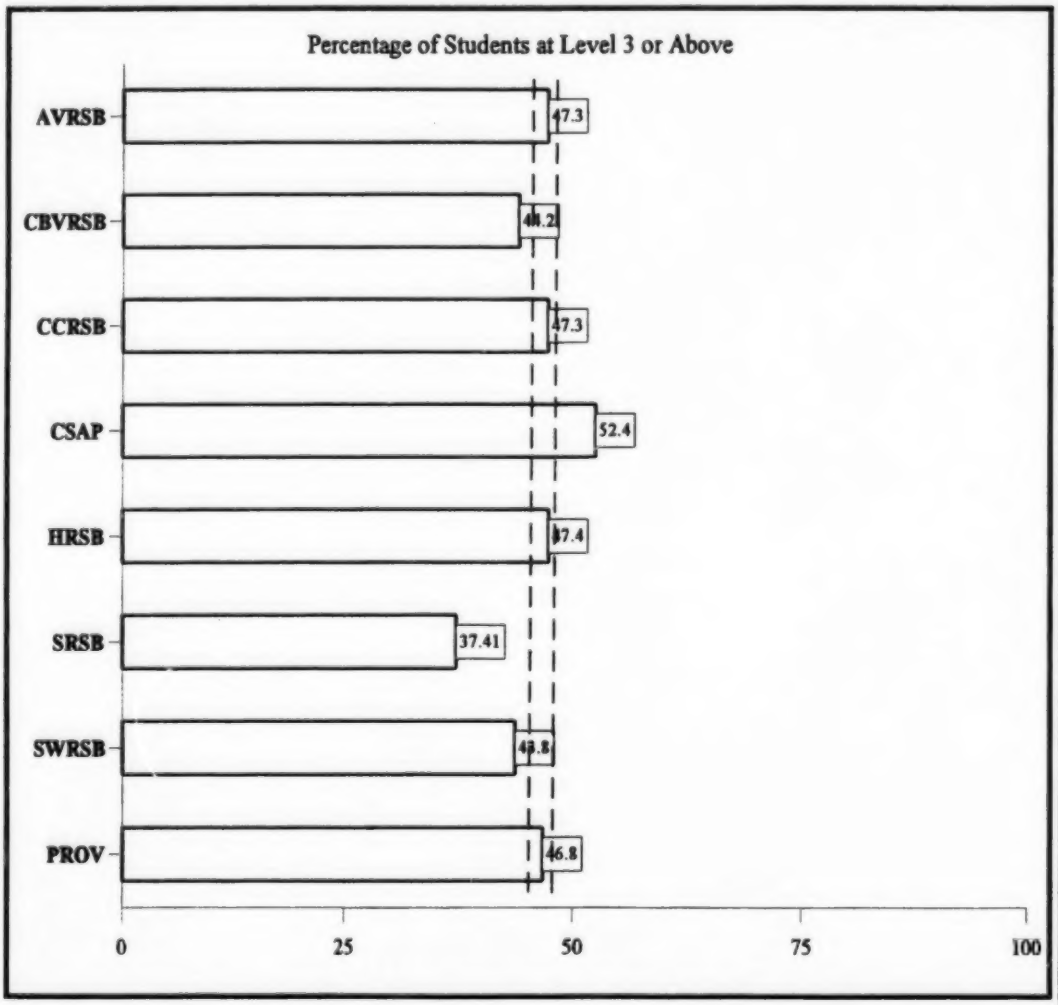


Poetry

Students were asked to write a personal response to a poem. To attain Level 3 a student must respond to the poem by expressing a feeling, an opinion or an interpretation; or by drawing a connection with personal experiences or other texts. Students must choose supportive evidence from the poem and/or personal experiences that show surface understanding of ideas and/or form.

Figure 4 presents the student achievement at Level 3 or above for the province and each school board. Forty seven percent of grade 6 students in Nova Scotia were able to reach or exceed the level of expectation.

Figure 4



Personal Narrative

Students were asked to write about a single event in their lives and prepare a final copy of their personal narrative. At the level of expectation (level 3), a student must demonstrate knowledge and interest in dealing with the topic and usually engage the reader. The writing has a narrative structure that may be sequential but lacks elaboration. The writer must demonstrate sufficient control of ideas, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure and rules of language to make communication clear. At times, sentence-level errors may be noticeable but usually do not interfere with communication.

Figure 5 presents the percentage of students achieving at Level 3 or above, the level of expectation for grade 6 students. For Nova Scotia, 71.2% of our students performed at Level 3 or above.

Figure 5